

## **This Magic Moment** by imperfectabstraction

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**Summary:**

Steve Harrington always imagined going to Hogwarts like his father and his grandfather before that. He just never imagined attending Hogwarts would mean having to avoid being beaten to death by an arch nemesis with blue eyes and a Cherub's face, adopting a group of kids, nearly being eaten by a faceless monster in the Forbidden Forest, and spending most of his evenings in detention. Magic is still pretty cool though.

AKA: The Hogwarts AU no one asked for.

## **This Magic Moment**

He wasn't going to throw up.

He *wasn't*.

So what if it was two weeks, three days, five hours, and twenty-six minutes after his eleventh birthday and he still hadn't received his letter from Hogwarts? It didn't mean anything. It didn't mean that he, Steven Joseph Harrington, was a squib.

It couldn't mean that because he was Steven Joseph Harrington.

As in the Harringtons. As in, every single person born into his family for the last seven generations had been a witch or a wizard and there was no way that he was going to be the first non-magical person to ever be born.

Steve paced in front of the lattice of the windows in the den, sneakered feet squeaking across the polished floor, and looked to the sky for the hundredth time in the past hour.

He chewed on the dry skin of his lower lip until he tasted the metallic tang of his own blood flooding his mouth. His stomach churned as he watched the clouds, waiting, and praying to see an owl making it way towards their summer home.

Maybe the owl didn't realize the Harrington's always went to the Hamptons for six weeks during the summer. Maybe right now as Steve paced across the floor leaving black scuffs in his wake there was some barn owl standing in front of their house in Tuscany, annoyed that it couldn't deliver the letter that would spell out Steve's future. Maybe the owl was pacing back and forth on the banister outside of his bedroom window wondering if for the first time in Hogwart's history, a magical student wouldn't receive his letter in time.

He wanted that to be true, but Tommy had gotten his letter two days ago, and his family had been in Egypt at the time for Christ's sake. So what was wrong with his letter?

What was wrong with *him*?

His thoughts drifted to the letter that Tommy had sent him less than 4 hours after he had received his letter from Hogwarts. Tommy's letter was sitting face-up on his desk where Steve had left it days before. The purple ink that Tommy had used was still smeared from Steve's tears. Tears that he had tried to hold back between his fingers while he pressed his palms to his cheeks hard enough that it hurt.

*I can't wait to go to Hogwarts with you! Tommy had written. Maybe we can get our parents to take us to Diagon Alley together? Wouldn't it be so cool if we could get our wands at the same time?!*

Wouldn't it be so cool if someone, anyone, could just tell Steve that he was a stupid wizard already?

He felt tears prick at his eyes again and let out a growl of frustration, forcing his eyes shut with an unnecessary amount of force. He had already cried over Tommy's stupid letter and Steve had always been prone to crying. Every childhood injury had spurred tears--fat, crocodile droplets that burst like overripe fruit when they reached the ground, spraying across his feet. Only Twinkles or his mother could get the tears to stop with gentle kisses to his brow or his unkempt hair, with a hum of a song, with warm caresses along his spine and shoulders.

But he was eleven now and the last time his father had caught him crying after Tommy had purposefully pulled apart a live butterfly's wings, Marcus Harrington had snapped, "Steven! You are too old for this. Stop being such a crybaby. You're embarrassing me and your mother."

Maybe Steve was too much of a crybaby to be a wizard.

"Little Masters Harrington?" A shrill voice called out behind him.

Steve glanced at the window one last time and was bitterly disappointed to find that there was still no owl flying towards his house. He turned and saw large, brown eyes staring back at him in midst of the pinched, wrinkled mass and overly large and pointed nose that made up Twinkles the house elf's face.

Twinkles' had been a servant of the Harrington family since Steve's father was born. Her skin was the color of warm chestnut, not too different from Steve's hair. Much like her nose, both her eyes and her ears protruded from her face. Her thin, knobby body was covered in a thin, periwinkle blue pillowcase that she had worn all of Steve's life. She was not a pretty creature to look upon and Steve's mother *hated* Twinkles. His mother was raised in the United States and house-elves were not particularly popular there. Probably because their treatment was reminiscent of slavery—but actually it was more likely that it was because they were ugly.

In the States, Steve's mother would constantly remind anyone who would listen, well-to do families hired magical au-pairs to take care of children and the household.

*"There is nothing a house-elf can do that a real witch or wizard couldn't do better, Marcus!"* Maria Harrington would sneer with painted lips.

But having a house-elf was a sign of wealth in old European magical families and his dad wouldn't hear anything about getting rid of Twinkles. Sometimes Steve wondered if it was because secretly, maybe so secretly that his father didn't even realize it himself, the real reason that his dad wouldn't get rid of Twinkles is because he loved her just like Steve did.

And Steve *loved* Twinkles.

There were times when he even worried if he loved the house-elf too much—if a child's feelings were supposed to extend to a servant the same way that a child could love and cherish their mother. But Twinkles was like a mother, a grandmother, an aunt, and a companion all in one.

Steve had no siblings and although he had never wanted for anything (other than this stupid letter), he was often very lonely. Twinkles did her very best to assuage his loneliness. There was many a day when he would run around his far too large and empty house, stick in hand, vanquishing Twinkles as the house-elf did her best impression of Grindelwald. She read to him, tried to sing to him though her voice was awful, told him stories, held his hand in the dark when he was afraid because his parents were afraid of the influence that the

Dark Lord was gaining in their inner circle, and checked for monsters under his bed. He knew parents were supposed to do all those things, but his didn't. So, Twinkles was the next best thing and that made it okay to love her as much as he did, even if she was just a stupid house-elf like Tommy said. Even if he knew that he could never say it out loud.

"Are you needing something from outside, little Misters Harrington?" Twinkles asked, wringing her hands in front of her clothed body.

"You can just call me Steve, Twinkles." He said for what must have been the five hundredth time, but he wasn't Twinkles' real master and both he and the house-elf knew that his mother would literally bleed out of her eyes and die on the floor if a house-elf thought it could be on a first name basis with a wizard. Still, when his parents weren't around, she could at least try to call him by his first name. Especially today when the weight of the word Harrington felt like it was enough to crush him into fairy dust.

He ignored Twinkles' question to make a sullen face at the window again. "Do you think I'm a squib, Twinkles?" The question fell from his mouth unbidden.

Twinkles gasped, and Steve groaned. Even to a house-elf being a squib was awful. "Of course not, little Misters Harrington! You will be the very bestest of wizards, Twinkles knows it!"

"Then why haven't I gotten my letter yet?" Steve snapped, spinning around. He was horrified to find that the tears that he thought he had gotten control over were now streaming down his cheeks. "My birthday was two weeks ago and Tommy got his the day of his birthday!"

"Oh little Misters Harrington!" Twinkles wailed, flinging her bony elvish arms around his shoulders and crushing his wet face into her clothed, narrow chest. "Twinkles knows you are a wizard! So does lady Harrington and the big Misters Harrington! All the ladies and the misters have their babies checked for magic, they do, they do!"

"They did?" Steve asked as more tears poured out of his eyes, wrapping his hands around Twinkle's waist.

“Yes! Yes! And little Mistery Harrington was a special wizard boy just as he was supposed to be!” The house-elf replied enthusiastically.

“Then why...why haven’t I gotten my letter yet? Do you think...do you think maybe they...” He was having a hard time getting the words out, on the verge of a full-on bout of sobbing from relief and shame. “Maybe no one wants me?”

The sound Twinkles made in response could really only be described as the death shriek of a bird ripped apart by a greater predator. “Hogwarts would be the very luckiest, most fortunate, happiest place in the whole wide world to have little Mistery Harrington as its student! Little Mistery Harrington is wonderful and kind and special and...” The house-elf pulled away to look into Steve’s eyes, her fevered gaze staring into his pitifully wet one. “Little Mistery Harrington is the very bestest boy in the whole wide world, at least...” her voice grew quieter and her bulging eyes grew soft in the way they did when she would tuck him in to sleep at night. “To Twinkles, little Mistery Harrington will always be the very best boy there ever was.”

Steve was eleven years, two weeks, three days, five hours, and who knew how many minutes old and had no memories of his mother or his father ever telling him what Twinkles just had.

A new batch of tears began, their reason far different and far harder to describe when he pulled the house-elf closer, pressed his tear swollen face into her plank of a stomach and cried until he was out of breath and tears.

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He woke up with a pounding headache in his own bed, swaddled in a duvet filled with Pegasus’ feathers his mother had bought from a boutique in Switzerland. Twinkles was sitting beside the bed on a crate, humming to herself as she wandlessly folded his clothes and levitated them into his dresser drawers.

Steve looked at his bedside table and was not surprised to see a glass of water and a bowl of strawberries powered with sugar waiting for him. He smiled for what felt like the first time in two weeks as he

reached for the bowl, popping one of the sweet berries into his mouth as he lounged in the warm covers and watched Twinkles as she worked.

A couple of years ago he probably would have been sad that it wasn't his mother or his father sitting with him instead, but he knew now that that just wasn't who his parents were and that was okay.

Speaking of his parents, he heard a tapping at his door. Either parent knocking was unusual as they were more of a barge in and make demands kind of family all around, but maybe they had heard him crying to Twinkles and it had made them so uncomfortable they were being cautious. That had happened before, though he was surprised he didn't get in trouble for all the waterworks.

"Come in," Steve muttered around another fat strawberry, wiping juice off his chin.

The knocking continued. "Come in!" He shouted, annoyed at the prospect of having to move while his head still hurt and having to engage with anyone besides Twinkles.

The knocking only increased in volume and intensity, as if the other person was getting progressively more annoyed.

"Little Misters Harrington," Twinkles whispered beside him. "Look."

He looked at her, lips turned downward into a frown of irritation before he saw that the house-elf's eyes were filled with tears and she was pointing not at the door but at his window.

Flinging his covers off, he threw the bowl onto his bed and ran towards his bedroom window.

Just outside of the lattice, looking ruffled and displeased, was a barn owl with a letter tied around its leg.